

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4597
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USCINCEUR

CONFIDENTIAL BEIRUT 3425

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS LE PLO
SUBJ: RENEWED FIGHTING AROUND SABRA

1. SUMMARY: FIGHTING BETWEEN SAIQA AND REJECTIONISTS BROKE OUT AGAIN IN VICINITY OF SABRA CAMP JULY 16-17. END SUMMARY.
2. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS REPORTS, FIGHTING BROKE OUT LATE IN NIGHT OF JULY 16-17 BETWEEN SAIQA AND PFLP. FIGHTING CONTINUED UNTIL MID-MORNING JULY 17, AND THERE HAS BEEN OCCASIONAL RIFLE FIRE SINCE, INCLUDING MORNING OF JULY 18. THE FIGHTING BEGAN IN A QUARTER OF THE SABRA CAMP AND LATER SPREAD TO THE CORNICHE AL MASRAA AREA AND ALSO THE SPORTS STADIUM. SYRIANS WERE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED ON THE GROUND, BUT THEY DID GIVE DIRECT ARTILLERY SUPPORT FROM VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN BEIRUT, USING MORTARS AND LIGHT ARTILLERY. SYRIANS ALSO SET UP ROADBLOCKS IN SABRA VICINITY.

3. ISF OFFICIAL INDICATES 14 SAIQA MEMBERS, 12 REJECTIONISTS,
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AND EIGHT FATAH KILLED, PLUS SOME 125 WOUNDED WHICH INCLUDED MANY CIVILIANS. AUH AS OF JULY 18 HAD RECEIVED FIVE WOUNDED, ONE SAIQA MEMBER AND FOUR CIVILIANS, TWO OF WHOM DIED AT THE HOSPITAL. THE MAQASSID HOSPITAL NEAR THE SCENE OF THE FIGHTING REPORTEDLY TREATED 50 WOUNDED, AND THE PALESTINIAN RED CRESCENT HOSPITAL ALSO REPORTEDLY TREATED LARGE NUMBER OF WOUNDED.

4. COMMENT: FIGHTING FITS RECENT PATTERN OF INCIDENTS BETWEEN MODERATE PALESTINIANS (PRINCIPALLY FATAH) AND PRO-SYRIAN PALESTINIANS (SAIQA) ON THE ONE HAND, AND VARIOUS REJECTIONISTS ON THE OTHER. IT IS CONSISTENT WITH SYRIAN POLICY OF APPLICATION OF CAIRO ACCORD IN BEIRUT AREA BY VERY SMALL STEPS AND COINCIDES WITH STATEMENTS BY PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBER PAKRADOUNI AND RUMORS EMANATING FROM VISIT BY FONMIN BOUTROS TO DAMASCUS OVER WEEKEND THAT CAIRO ACCORD WOULD BE "APPLIED" FIRST IN BEIRUT AREA, LATER IN SOUTH LEBANON. AS OF THIS TIME, HOWEVER, WE CANNOT SAY WHO STARTED THIS LATEST ROUND, OR WHETHER OR NOT REJECTIONISTS' POSITIONS ON THE GROUND HAVE BEEN WEAKENED ON ACCOUNT OF IT. ONE STORY WE HAVE HEARD FROM ASF SOURCES IS THAT REJECTIONISTS, PUSHED BY IRAQI ELEMENTS, STARTED IT AS WAY TO CONTRERACT CURRENT MODERATE PALESTINIAN EFFORTS TO FIND POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION WITH LEBANESE CHRISTIANS.

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